

General Electric statement to CBC News / Toronto Star

Wednesday September 11, 2019

Email from Jeff Caywood, GE Director of Communications, Boston

I wanted to share our statement and background points to meet your original 5 p.m. deadline (very much appreciate the lead time so I could work with the local team) and to provide some context around the work we've completed over the past 15+ years. If you are agreeable to a discussion on background, I am available tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. ET to chat.

Cheers ... Jeff

From a GE Spokesperson:

"The health and safety of our employees and the public is a top priority for GE. Since 2003, we have removed insulation with asbestos containing material derived from the Peterborough facility. We will continue work with the community and homeowners if additional material is found."

On background/not for attribution:

GE has a long-term commitment to the Peterborough community, and will continue to implement remedial measures to any homes brought to the attention of GE.

- If local residents believe their homes may have insulation with asbestos containing material (ACM) derived from the Peterborough Site, they may call the GE Canada Environmental Programs Information Line: 1-877-399-9599. A GE Canada representative will respond to calls within one business day.
- To date, GE Canada has implemented remedial measures on 24 homes, focused on the safe removal/remediation of ACM insulation. These projects have involved the reconstruction of ceilings, walls, soffits or attics.

A wide range of industries across North America used ACM to strengthen, insulate and fireproof their products.

- GE stopped using ACM in its Peterborough plant in 1980, eight years before the Federal government banned the sale of asbestos in 1988.
- GE Canada's Wire and Cable business, which operated at the Site from 1945 to 1978, used ACM in production comprised of approximately 75% asbestos and 25% cotton. It's important to note that GE did not manufacture ACM.

GE Canada's principal focus is to protect human health and safety of current homeowners by removing ACM insulation derived from the Site.

- In 2003, GE Canada initiated voluntary remediation of homes. A licensed asbestos consulting firm inspected homes to assess how much ACM insulation was present,

the type, and the location.

- Sampling of the ACM insulation was undertaken to determine if it was derived from the Site. Once confirmed, the consulting firm oversaw removal, air monitoring, and reconstruction associated with ACM.
- Since 2003, if homeowners discover ACM insulation in their home, they can submit it for testing to a local facility to determine if the material was derived from the Site.
- GE Canada covers 100% of the costs associated with the removal and remediation of ACM insulation derived from the Site.

Re: Status of Peterborough facility

- GE Canada ceased manufacturing operations at the Site at the end of 2018. Decommissioning is under way and this process will take time.
- Approximately 50 GE employees remain in engineering and sales operations roles to continue serving customers.
- GE is working cooperatively with city and local economic development officials to return the Site to productive reuse for the benefit of the Peterborough community
- BWXT has a long-term lease at the Site, ensuring ongoing employment on the property and in the community.

Jeff Caywood
Director, Headquarters Communications
GE

ORIGINAL QUESTIONS TO GE FROM CBC / TORONTO STAR

By email Friday September 6, 2019

From Sara Mojtehdzadeh of Toronto Star to GE Director of Communications Jeff Caywood.

Dear Jeff,

I am a reporter at the Toronto Star. As you are aware, I am working with my colleague Dave Seglins at the CBC on a story about General Electric asbestos in Peterborough homes. We are writing to seek your comment. We'd like to reiterate our preference for an on-camera interview, but so far this request hasn't been granted.

Please let us know if this decision changes; we are eager to include your perspective as fully as possible in the interests of fair and balanced reporting. Failing an on-camera interview, we will require responses to the questions below by 5pm on Wednesday, September 11th for inclusion in our story.

- When did GE start remediating homes for scrap asbestos
- How many homes has GE remediated to date?
- How do Peterborough residents find out about the GE remediation program?
- Why did GE deny selling scrap asbestos in a May 4, 2004 Peterborough Examiner article? (Please see the GE works newsletter attached from 1956 confirming sale of the material)
- Why were no public outreach efforts made about the possibility of GE asbestos being in local homes?
- Why is GE not using the media and seeking co-operation from local government to help to find all the people whose homes may contain GE asbestos? Has the current chief medical officer in Peterborough been briefed on the remediation program?
- Does GE have records indicating which homes may contain its asbestos?
- How many homes does GE estimate may contain asbestos from the plant? (City councillor Keith Riel and GE's remediation contractor believe there could be hundreds of homes containing high-concentration chrysotile asbestos originating from GE's Peterborough wire and cable division).
- Have any efforts been made to proactively contact all homes that may contain GE asbestos?
- Why does GE ask homeowners to waive any liability for health issues stemming from asbestos if they participate in the remediation program?
- Why is GE paying to remove asbestos from area homes?
- How much money has GE spent to date on the company's asbestos remediation program in Peterborough?
- What - if any - concerns does GE have about the potential impact of scrap asbestos historically used as insulation in former workers' homes?
- The negative health effects caused by asbestos were [well-known](#) by the 1920s -- prompting the then-president of General Electric Company Gerard Swope to conduct a health and safety study in GE plants in the US. Why did GE Peterborough sell workers scrap asbestos?
- For how long was GE asbestos sold to workers and the broader community, to your knowledge?
- A 1942 Pennsylvania department of labour report obtained by the Star/CBC quoted the state's local GE plant as saying its asbestos recycling system had "added to our saleable

waste 20% of good fiber which is valued at \$500. per year.” Is GE aware of asbestos being sold in any other communities where its plants operate?

- What broader environmental remediation efforts is GE making in Peterborough?
- When will GE’s Peterborough facility close entirely? What will happen to the land?

Please feel free to contact us with any queries. We are happy to speak at any time and provide any clarifications you may require.

Many thanks for your help.

Best wishes,

Sara Mojtehdzadeh
Reporter, Toronto Star